UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-NINTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL AND
DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE
(FOURTH COMMITTEE)
15th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 1 November 1994
at 3.30 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HUDYMA (Ukraine)

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AGENDA ITEM 77: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.4/49/SR.15
15 November 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

94-81923 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 77: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (A/49/13, A/49/288-S/1994/903, A/49/439, A/49/440, A/49/441, A/49/442, A/49/443, A/49/448, A/49/488, A/49/505, A/49/509, A/49/570)

1. Mr. TÜRKMEN (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)), briefly reviewing what UNRWA had achieved in the previous year, said that the Agency had moved quickly to set up its Peace Implementation Programme (PIP) aimed at a rapid improvement in the socio-economic infrastructure in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. UNRWA was currently handling projects worth approximately $120 million in those areas. Under the first phase of PIP, UNRWA was constructing and renovating schools, health clinics, shelters, women's programme centres and community rehabilitation centres. The second phase of PIP, the purpose of which was to target assistance to those areas where the public sector infrastructure required immediate improvement, had been elaborated in coordination with Palestinian technical and political authorities. Many of the projects were aimed at benefiting the thousands of returnees employed by the Palestinian Authority, including the police force and their families, as well as the environmental health infrastructure. As self-government had progressed in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, UNRWA had received numerous ad hoc requests from the Palestinians for assistance, including requests for food, medical supplies and temporary housing, in-service training for public sector teachers, schooling and medical care for returnee families, prefabricated housing for former detainees and donor funds for the salary and recurrent costs of the Palestinian police force. UNRWA had been asked to develop new forms of assistance because other organizations had not been deployed in a substantial operational manner and because UNRWA already had in place systems that could respond rapidly and effectively.

2. He attached special importance to the income-generation and job creation programme based on a revolving fund scheme which had enabled UNRWA to lend more than $3.4 million to approximately 150 small and medium-sized businesses, 43 per cent of which were completely new. UNRWA had also introduced a special small-scale enterprise development programme aimed at very poor women.

3. One of the Agency's main concerns in the health area was the deteriorating environmental situation, especially in the Gaza Strip. Overcrowding in the camps and catchment areas had aggravated existing environmental health conditions by increasing the risk of infection and making it more difficult to provide adequate potable water and sewers. For the long-term survival of the Gaza Strip, it would be necessary to ensure provision of adequate supplies of potable water, improve waste-water management in the camps and municipalities, properly treat and dispose of waste, and install storm-water and sewerage systems. For its part, UNRWA had set up a special environmental health division in Gaza and had conducted feasibility studies, developed appropriate information systems for project planning and design, and initiated environment-related projects and feasibility studies in a number of camps in the Gaza Strip. Money

had also been earmarked for environmental health infrastructure projects in Gaza and the West Bank.

4. UNRWA was making every attempt to ensure that the needs of Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic were not overlooked while attention was being focused on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

5. Regarding UNRWA's financial situation, he noted that in contrast to the generous flow of funds for projects, contributions to UNRWA's regular and emergency budgets had not been adequate to meet the Agency's recurrent costs. UNRWA had begun 1994 with a deficit of $43 million in its regular and emergency budget, of which $21 million represented funds for the operation of its programmes, mainly salaries for teachers, doctors, nurses, technical staff and others. The austerity measures introduced in 1993 and carried over to the 1994 budget accounted for $22 million. The Agency needed a minimum 5 per cent budget increase each year to cover demographic growth and rising costs, and annual contributions to UNRWA were not even keeping pace with that figure. UNRWA had been able to reduce its deficit to approximately $26.2 million, of which $11.6 million represented items such as the monthly payroll and essential drugs for UNRWA clinics. The 1993 austerity measures accounted for $14.6 million, which also included items such as the hiring of additional teachers to accommodate increased school enrolment and hospitalization costs. UNRWA had exhausted all possibilities open to it to reduce expenditure further; the Agency currently faced the prospect of reducing its $22 million working capital by $11.6 million to cover the monthly payroll and keep the Agency functioning. He appealed to all Governments to find a way of alleviating the Agency's structural deficit problem and helping UNRWA to bring the 1994 deficit down to manageable proportions. If solutions to the financial problems were not forthcoming, installations would have to close down, staff would have to be laid off, and new students might have to be turned away from schools, thus sending an unfortunate message to the refugees at a time when they were expecting to reap the rewards of peace.

6. UNRWA was actively engaged in planning and implementing the move of its headquarters from Vienna to Gaza by the end of 1995. The transfer of its headquarters was leading UNRWA to review possible means of rationalizing Agency operations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Agency would initially focus on the administrative integration of certain functions currently being performed separately in its two field offices in Jerusalem and Gaza. Such an approach would not only save funds but would also help the process of integration of services.

7. The prospects for further agreements in the region had induced many donors to focus on UNRWA's life-span. Consensus should emerge among donors, host Governments, the Palestinian Authority and others on a common perception of UNRWA and its future. A framework of five years could usefully be applied to UNRWA, as the successful completion of negotiations would see the phasing out of the Agency's activities. Such a time-frame would allow donor countries, host countries, the Palestinians and others to plan for the coming years so that contributions could be adjusted as appropriate and UNRWA could be assured of a

more stable financial resource base. A review could be undertaken in three years, at which time it would be possible to evaluate more precisely UNRWA's responsibilities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and whether there could be a different sharing of responsibilities between UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinians might wish to undertake such a review of UNRWA services even earlier with the aim of assuming responsibility for at least some of the Agency services before then. The Agency was fully prepared to discuss matters related to the hand-over process. Since the views expressed by donors, host Governments and others on that issue had not always converged, there was a risk that uncoordinated policies could destabilize services and undermine the Agency's efficiency and effectiveness. He therefore proposed that a meeting should be held in Gaza early in 1995 which would provide an opportunity to clarify positions, prepare the ground for a consensus and prevent the sort of improvisation which would be detrimental to the morale of the refugees and Agency staff.

8. Transferring UNRWA services to the Palestinians involved a complex process of welding two fairly separate structures in education, health, relief and social services. An initial requirement would be a period of harmonization between the services offered by UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority. To that end, joint committees had already been established to address issues such as school curricula, teacher training, immunization policy, mother and child care and family planning, essential drugs, school health services and hospital services. In the social sphere, joint committees were cooperating in poverty alleviation, welfare assistance, social worker training and refugee housing. A gradual hand-over would also involve donors and other institutions with a regional role like the World Bank, all of whom needed to discuss how services thus taken over would be financed.

9. Mr. AASS (Norway), Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, introducing the report of the Working Group (A/49/570), said that, in accordance with its mandate under General Assembly resolution 48/40 B, the Working Group had continued its efforts, in cooperation with the Secretary-General and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, for the financing of UNRWA. It had been given a briefing by the Agency's Comptroller on the current financial situation of UNRWA and its needs for 1995. After considering the Comptroller's report at a subsequent meeting, the Working Group had formulated its concluding remarks which appeared in section IV of the report.

10. The Working Group was particularly concerned about the negative cumulative effect of the austerity measures which UNRWA had had to take. It had noted the assessment presented by the Commissioner-General of the contributions required to avoid running down the operational capital reserves and to maintain the standard of services at their current level in order to fund the regular UNRWA budget in 1994 and the Extraordinary Measures in Lebanon and the Occupied Territory.

11. The Working Group commended the Commissioner-General for his fund-raising efforts, and joined UNRWA in expressing appreciation to donors, especially for new or increased contributions. It welcomed the agreement reached by UNRWA with

the Government of Saudi Arabia for the financing of PIP projects in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and hoped that that example would be followed by others among the wealthier States in the region.

12. The Working Group shared the Commissioner-General's concern that the Agency's core activities were being increasingly threatened because of its chronic budget deficit problem, and that there might be insufficient funds to finance some of the PIP programmes. It would be a tragedy if the PIP programmes were undermined by the inability of the international community to provide the resources needed to preserve the regular services of UNRWA at a vital moment in Middle East history.

13. The Working Group supported the Commissioner-General's strict policy of giving priority to operational programmes. It therefore believed that the transfer of the Office's headquarters from Vienna to Gaza should not be financed with funds earmarked for operational programmes at a time when UNRWA had to meet the new needs generated by the establishment of Palestinian self-rule. It requested that a detailed financing plan be drawn up before the transfer took place.

14. The Working Group's conclusions appeared in paragraph 19 of its report. It urged Governments to make new or increased contributions to UNRWA and to make additional contributions in support of ongoing emergency-related and special programmes in Lebanon, PIP activities and construction projects, without decreasing their contributions to the Agency's regular programmes.

15. Ms. ABDELHADY (Observer for Palestine) said that it was important to build on the positive results which had been achieved at the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, largely because of the balanced and realistic approach taken to UNRWA. The major developments in the peace process were only the first steps in a transitional period on the path towards peace. Negotiation on final status issues, including the issue of the Palestine refugees, would not begin until the second stage. It was imperative to maintain basic positions, firmly based upon the principles of international law.

16. Despite the achievements of the peace process, over 3 million Palestine refugees, including those persons displaced in 1967, remained dispersed throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Syrian Arab Republic, and elsewhere. Those refugees had been waiting, many for almost half a century, for a just and comprehensive resolution of their plight on the basis of the right of repatriation or compensation in accordance with paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

17. The Agency's contribution towards the goal of peace was unquestionable, and had been recognized by the General Assembly in paragraph 5 of resolution 48/40 A. UNRWA had initiated new programmes and activities: for example, it had provided urgent assistance to the Palestinian Authority in the health sector in Gaza. Once donors had recognized the Agency's experience and rapid response capacity, they had made generous funding available for the newest projects and services under PIP. PIP projects had been undertaken to benefit not only

refugees in the Occupied Territory, but also refugees in the Agency's other three fields of operation, in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. At a time of heightened international attention to developments in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, it was important to give the same attention to the rights and needs of Palestine refugees in the other three areas.

18. Following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, UNRWA had begun preparing for an eventual hand-over of its installations, services and programmes to the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. An agreement, embodied in an exchange of letters, had been reached between UNRWA and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Although the Advisory Commission of UNRWA had entered into a relationship with the PLO, that relationship was not the working relationship mandated in General Assembly decision 48/417. Her delegation expressed appreciation for the Agency's readiness to assist in the disbursement of salaries and other support costs of the Palestinian Police Force.

19. Her delegation agreed with the Commissioner-General that the transfer of UNRWA headquarters from Vienna to the Occupied Territory demonstrated the commitment of the United Nations to making peace a success, as well as the confidence of the United Nations in the Palestinian Authority. At the same time, her delegation affirmed the need for the maintenance of all field offices, especially the field office in Jerusalem.

20. Unfortunately the staff members of UNRWA continued to face difficulties, including arrest, detention, mistreatment and injury, while attempting to carry out their duties. Section IV of the report of the Commissioner-General (A/49/13) dealt with that issue. Problems persisted with regard to the movement of staff members into and out of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, incursions into the Agency's installations, including hospitals and clinics, by Israeli security forces, injury to Agency staff and damage to Agency property. As noted in paragraph 80 of the report, the refugee affairs officers of UNRWA continued to assist in defusing tension and facilitating the delivery of medical services. Her delegation reiterated its belief that the application of international standards of human rights and the applicability to all the Occupied Palestinian Territory of the Fourth Geneva Convention should never be compromised.

21. Her delegation expressed regret about the content of the letter sent by the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations in response to the Secretary-General's efforts to fulfil his reporting responsibilities under General Assembly resolution 48/40. Her delegation welcomed the appointment of a Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, which highlighted the important role the United Nations could play in the transitional period. She expressed appreciation to all donors to UNRWA and to PIP and urged continued contributions to help ease the financial problems being faced by UNRWA. If UNRWA's services to the Palestine refugees were allowed to deteriorate, that would clearly neither be in the best interests of the refugees nor contribute to the maintenance of stability at a critical stage in the peace process.

22. While the international community should continue to support positive developments in the peace process, it should at the same time reaffirm its position of principle with regard to the rights of the Palestine refugees in accordance with international law, and continue to provide needed assistance to those refugees until a real solution was found. She wished to emphasize the inalienable and individual nature of the rights of Palestine refugees and the need to differentiate between those rights and the right of every single Palestinian to Palestinian nationality and citizenship.

23. Mr. ABU ODEH (Jordan) thanked the Commissioner-General for his report, and UNRWA for its continuing efforts to help the Palestine refugees. The historic developments in the political situation in the Middle East, and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and Jericho had presented UNRWA with new challenges, and placed it in a new relationship with the Palestinian people. The social and economic infrastructure developed by UNRWA over the last 40 years would provide the Palestinian Authority with solid foundations on which to build.

24. Although the PLO had agreed with the Israeli Government that the question of the refugees should be left to the final stages of the peace negotiations, Jordan felt it was essential to work towards settling that matter through discussions and multilateral working groups, within the framework of the peace process. About two thirds of the Palestinian people had refugee status, and were very dependent on UNRWA, the Palestinian Authority and the host country Governments.

25. There had been a serious shortfall in contributions to UNRWA, leading to a severe deficit in its budget which he feared would not only lead to a reduction in the services UNRWA was able to provide to the refugees, but would also cause the Palestinians to lose faith in the international community, as represented by UNRWA, at a crucial stage in the peace process.

26. UNRWA's budget deficit also increased the burden on host countries. The budget of the Government of Jordan could not support the cost of the services it was providing to the refugees, which greatly exceeded the contributions of any donor to the agency. The most recent statistics showed that out of a total of 3,006,788 Palestinian refugees, Jordan was accommodating 1,193,539, or almost 40 per cent. However, UNRWA had allocated to its Jordan office only 20 per cent of its 1994 budget of US$ 309.1 million. That meant that Jordan, rather than the international community, had to find the difference in the cost of providing services to Palestinian refugees. Jordan was grateful to the Commissioner-General for the acknowledgement in his report of Jordan's important contribution to the work of the Agency. That acknowledgement, in addition to the severe economic burden placed on Jordan and the pressure upon it to provide essential services for the refugees, should stimulate the international community, as represented by the large donor States, to cooperate with Jordan, in order to enable it to continue providing a decent life for Palestinian refugees, in support of the peace process and security in the whole region.

27. The Secretary-General's decision to transfer UNRWA headquarters to Gaza would benefit the refugees, provide support for social and economic programmes, and facilitate assistance operations in the self-governing areas. The transfer should be made as soon as was consistent with maintaining operational efficiency, but UNRWA should not bear the cost, as that would affect its assistance programmes and increase the burden on host States. The United Nations should assume full responsibility for the transfer costs.

28. In his report covering the period from 1 July 1992 to 30 June 1993 (A/48/13), the Commissioner-General had expressed the hope "that this report covers an era which is gone for ever". Jordan had shared his hope at that time. It now shared the disappointment expressed in his latest report (A/49/13) that that era had not gone for ever, and that there had been an increase in the number of serious and fatal incidents, and of the collective punishments consequent upon them, which increased the suffering of the Palestinian people living under occupation. It was to be hoped that the will of all the interested parties and States in the region, together with the help of the international community, would remove all the causes for the suffering of the Palestinian people, their legitimate national and human rights would be restored to them in their own country, and that that black period would be ended forever.

29. Mr. RUDOLPH (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union and Austria, congratulated the Commissioner-General and his staff for their excellent work over the previous 12 months and thanked him and the Secretary-General for their reports. He also thanked the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA for its analysis and recommendations. His delegation deplored that during the period under review UNRWA staff members had fallen victim to the violence in the Territories, and hoped that the further implementation of the agreements and progress in the peace process would diminish and eventually end that violence.

30. The current report of the Commissioner-General covered a period of far-reaching changes which had accelerated with the signing in Washington of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO, both of which remained committed to the peace process, as was confirmed by the signing of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area on 4 May 1994 and the early empowerment agreement of 29 August 1994. The conclusion of the Peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan and the progress in the negotiations with the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon had given rise to new hope of positive developments for all the refugees.

31. The Cairo Agreement had made tangible to the people of the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area the promises contained in the Declaration of Principles. A decade of nightly curfews was giving way to a normal social and family life marked by the redeployment of Israeli troops, the arrival of the Palestinian Police Force and steps to set up the Palestinian Authority, all of which was indicative of an emerging new reality.

32. Those transformations posed new tasks and challenges for UNRWA, whose long experience in the region and outstanding operational capability placed it in a

privileged position to accompany and indeed buttress the peace process in the social and economic sector. From the beginning of that process UNRWA had been able to deliver its services in a way that allowed a large part of the Palestinian population to feel the spirit of the new era.

33. The timely launching of the Peace Implementation Programme on 6 October 1993 had been designed to contribute to stabilizing social and economic conditions, especially in the Gaza Strip, although the Commissioner-General had emphasized that those additional endeavours by the Agency should not be limited to Gaza and the West Bank, but be extended also to the Palestinian population of concern to UNRWA in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, an approach which the European Union had strongly supported. The European Union welcomed the swift and positive response of donors to the Peace Implementation Programme, which was a clear sign of trust and confidence in the Agency by the donor community.

34. His delegation also welcomed the Agency's constructive role in assisting the nascent institutions of the Palestinian Authority, to whom the Commissioner-General and his staff should continue to lend their support. During the period covered by the report of the Commissioner-General, coordination of programmes and activities with specialized agencies, including the World Bank, had become increasingly necessary, and his delegation took note of the fruitful dialogue into which the Agency had entered with some of those new players, who had been able to benefit from its experience in the region. In so doing, UNRWA had acted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 48/40 A. The appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories was an important step in that regard.

35. The same resolution had also requested "that the headquarters of the Agency be transferred as soon as practicable to its area of operations", a request that had been quickly acted upon by the Secretary-General and the Commissioner-General, whose plan envisaged that transfer by the end of 1995. Every precaution should be taken to ensure that the effectiveness of the Agency's operations was not impaired by the transfer, particularly in relation to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. A detailed financial plan should be produced before the transfer, and its cost should not be defrayed from the Agency's regular budget. The European Union was confident that the Secretary-General and UNRWA would consult fully with donors on those important issues before taking further steps.

36. The European Union and its member States, who were the most important contributors to UNRWA operations during 1993, were deeply concerned about the Agency's financial situation. Despite the freezing of approximately US$ 17 million, the Agency had ended 1993 with a deficit of some US$ 10 million, which had had to be financed out of working capital. The prognosis for 1994 was even worse, and it was untenable that UNRWA's regular programmes should be threatened by structural deficits that would send a wrong signal to the region. His delegation called upon States that had contributed in the past to continue to do so, and on those that had not to reconsider their position. His delegation noted with particular satisfaction the recent generous contribution

by the Government of Saudi Arabia, whose example all the States in the region should follow in a spirit of regional solidarity.

37. In allowing the refugees to keep up their hope of a normal life the Agency performed the essential task of assisting those who sought peace and diminishing the numbers of those tempted by violence. The United Nations would bear a heavy responsibility if it refused to provide the Agency with the means necessary to fulfil its mission.

38. Mr. MOHAMED (Bahrain) said that his Government had welcomed developments since the Madrid Conference in 1991 as steps towards a comprehensive and just settlement in the Middle East. Those developments would have a profound effect upon the work of the United Nations with regard to the Palestinian question, and on UNRWA. Since October 1993, UNRWA had coordinated its activities with the peace process, holding consultations with the PLO and the major contributors to the Agency. One of its most important goals was to strengthen infrastructure in education, health, environment, assistance programmes and social services. The implementation of such programmes would provide employment opportunities for many unemployed Palestinians, which could be a positive contribution to the peace process.

39. However, UNRWA was faced with the serious problem of a budget deficit which had compelled it to take a number of economy measures. His Government had made token contributions to UNRWA in the past few years in order to participate in its work. He hoped that UNRWA would pay increased attention to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, since ignoring their needs would have negative effects on the peace process.

40. Mr. BATU (Turkey) thanked the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and his staff for their excellent report on the Agency's work and expressed his appreciation to the Commissioner-General for his statement describing the Agency's efforts on behalf of over 3 million Palestinian refugees, despite serious financial difficulties.

41. Rather than reducing UNRWA's task, the positive developments in the Middle East peace process had made it more complex. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area and the anticipated extension of self-rule to the rest of the West Bank had ushered in a new era in UNRWA's relationship with the Palestinian people. In addition to providing the services it had supplied for over 40 years, UNRWA was due to begin preparing to hand over its installations, services and programmes to the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; it would also focus considerable energy on the forthcoming transfer of its headquarters from Vienna to the Gaza Strip, following the decision by the Secretary-General. His delegation believed that the best solution to the question of that transfer, including financial aspects, could be reached through consultations between the members of UNRWA's Advisory Commission and the Commissioner-General.

42. In his capacity as Chairman of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, he was fully aware of the financial problems posed for the Agency by its 1993

budget deficit of US$ 10 million, and by the estimated 1994 cash shortfall of US$ 43 million in its regular and emergency budgets. The new challenges and responsibilities that UNRWA would be shouldering should be matched by financial support from the international community, who shared common responsibility for its task. He commended the Commissioner-General's efforts to raise funds and explain the Agency's problems and prospects, and expressed the hope that the example set by some donors would be followed by others.

43. The Israeli-Palestinian and Israel-Jordan agreements had opened up a new era of reconciliation and hope which would undoubtedly have positive ramifications on a much wider regional and global scale. The establishment of permanent peace in the Middle East would also create the conditions for harmony, economic cooperation and prosperity. As a neighbour of the Middle East, Turkey had supported the just cause of the Palestinian people from the very beginning. It had also supported the peace process based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The Palestinian people more than ever required the assistance of the international community, and at the beginning of 1994, Turkey had donated the sum of US$ 2 million to meet their immediate needs, and had also pledged an Eximbank loan of US$ 50 million for investments in Gaza and the Jericho Area. Turkey had also contributed US$ 100,000 to UNRWA's budget for the transfer of its headquarters to Gaza, and was still considering additional contributions. Lastly, a Turkish trade mission had recently paid a visit to Gaza and the Jericho Area to examine the possibilities for cooperation.

44. Mr. GNEHM (United States of America) reaffirmed the strong support of the United States for the work of UNRWA, in particular for its Peace Implementation Programme, and for the leadership of the Commissioner-General. As UNRWA's largest single donor, and a co-sponsor of the Madrid process, the United States was pleased to see UNRWA working to implement the peace process agreements.

45. The United States noted the substantial progress in the peace process and endorsed the decision by the Secretary-General to move UNRWA headquarters from Vienna to Gaza by the end of 1995. The United States was reviewing the financing of that transfer in consultation with other members of UNRWA's Advisory Commission and other major donors.

46. The coming year promised even more rapid change than the previous one, and his delegation looked forward to continued efforts by UNRWA to adapt in order to meet the changing needs of the Palestinian refugee community throughout the region. His delegation noted that "the Agency would soon begin a process of preparation for the eventual hand-over of its installations, services and programmes to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip". The Government of the United States strongly supported that process and looked forward to further information about UNRWA's planning and to assisting it to achieve that important goal.

47. Lastly, he expressed the hope that all parties and the international community would continue to extend their cooperation and expertise to UNRWA as it played its part in reaching a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

48. Mr. ABOUL NASR (Observer for the League of Arab States) said that there had been political developments of the utmost importance in the region in the period covered by the report of the Commissioner-General and since that time, and the work of the Agency had entered a completely new era. The Agency's achievements in the fields of education, health and social services under the Peace Implementation Programme it had established in 1993 represented a practical contribution to the ongoing peace process.

49. The League of Arab States, which had welcomed the peace agreements, urged the United Nations and the international community to provide all possible support to the Palestinian Authority in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area given that the success of the Authority in performing its task would constitute a major step towards a comprehensive settlement. It should not be forgotten that certain fundamental issues remained to be discussed at subsequent stages, including the status of Arab Jerusalem, the removal of the settlements and a just solution to the refugee problem on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

50. The reports before the Committee indicated that the Israeli authorities were continuing to obstruct the functioning of the Palestinian Authority and to impose repressive measures that were incompatible with the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and with the agreements recently concluded. That had caused increased suffering for the Palestinian people and had led to an escalation of violence in the occupied territories that might have a negative effect on the peace process.

51. Despite the contributions made to the Agency over the past year, it continued to suffer from a shortfall in resources and it projected a deficit for 1994 that was twice that for 1993. It would be a tragedy if the social and economic benefits promised by the Peace Implementation Programme should be undermined by the inability of the international community to provide the resources needed at such a vital stage.

52. The Council of the League of Arab States had adopted a resolution in September 1994 recommending that the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, in cooperation with UNRWA and the countries concerned, should conduct a general census of Palestine refugees, establish an inventory of their property and elaborate a comprehensive scheme for a solution to the problem on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), and that the Arab countries at the United Nations should support the maintenance of UNRWA until such time as there was a just solution to the refugee problem on the basis of paragraph 11 of that resolution.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.